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ECA WORK PROGRAMME AND PRIORITIES IN THE FIELD OF HUMAN RESOURCES

1982-1983 AND MEDIUM-TERM PLAN 1984-1989

Presentation Note

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The work programmes and priorities here presented, while covering education, training, labour and employment, public administration and finance and some other activities related to human resources, do not pretend to cover all aspects of the Secretariat's activities in the human resources field. This is because manpower and training elements in the activities of the substantive sectors of development are largely dealt within the respective sectors. Overall co-ordination in manpower development through training is however effected in collaboration with the human resource development programmes per se. Thus the social welfare aspects of human resources development and utilization would normally fall within the competence of ECA Social Development Division and the ECA/OAU Conference of Ministers of Social Affairs.

It is also necessary to note that the Secretariat's work programmes and priorities, 1982-1983 and Medium-Term Plan, 1984-1989, were considered, reviewed and adopted by the Second Meeting of the Technical Preparatory, Committee of Experts and the Seventh Meeting of the Conference of Ministers of the Commission, held in Freetown (Sierra Leone) from 24 March to 6 April and from 8 to 11 April 1981 respectively. That review by those bodies was somewhat general; it was therefore not possible to achieve any in-depth review of the programme of any one sector, except in those cases where appropriate sectoral review machinery existed. Human resource was one such major sector that hitherto lacked any intergovernmental regional review machinery and consequently ECA work programmes in this sector lacked in-depth review and proper guidance.

For the current review of the work programmes in respect of 1982-1983, and the Medium-Term Plan, 1984-1989, it should be borne in mind that the 1982-1983 work programmes derived from the guidelines and priorities established by the Lagos Plan of Action. As a follow-up and in the same strategy direction, the Medium-Term Plan represents a projection of planned activities, involving the intensification of the strategy in operation and adoption of new programme activities aimed at the full realization of declared development objectives. Consequently, a combined review of both the 1982-1983 work programmes and priorities and the Medium-Term Plan, 1984-1989, should therefore be made.

Overall development strategy

Between 1978 and 1980 both member States and the Secretariat have been involved in a series of sustained efforts to re-examine the region's development strategy and policy options. The main landmarks in this process of self-examination were:

(a) the seminar on Alternative Patterns of Development and Life-styles for Africa (December 1978);

(b) the Symposium on the Future Development Prospects of Africa towards the Year 2000;

(c) the adoption of the Revised Framework of Principles for the Implementation of the New International Economic Order in Africa as well as the Development Strategy for Africa for the United Nations Third Development Decade in March 1979;

(d) the Monrovia Strategy for the Economic Development of Africa adopted in July 1979 by the Thirty-third Ordinary Session of the Organization of African Unity; and

(e) the adoption of the Lagos Plan of Action by the Second Extraordinary Session and Economic Summit of the OAU, held in Lagos in April 1980

The strategy of development outlined for Africa by the above guiding principles has on each occasion provided for the development of human resources in order to ensure the peoples' full participation in the development process as well as eliminating manpower constraints to development efforts. These two basic requirements, namely, full and effective labour participation in production and distribution activities and in the fruits of socio-economic development, and manpower input as a production factor, constitute the cardinal guiding principles in the determination of human resource planning, development and utilization strategy for the African region. Other elements in the strategy are the principles of co-operation and collective self-reliance at subregional and regional levels; and the manpower requirements for "the establishment of self-sustaining, internally located processes of development and economic growth at the national and/or multinational level".

Human resources planning, development and utilization strategy as outlined in the Lagos Plan of Action, may be reviewed under the following broad programme areas:

- Education, Training, Labour and Employment;
- Public Administration and Finance.

Sector: Education, Training, Labour and Employment

I. Overall strategy

Within the framework of both the United Nations Third Development Decade and the Lagos Plan of Action, the strategy in the design of human resources, planning, development and utilization programmes in Africa is to achieve the following long-term objectives:

(a) making African States become increasingly self-sufficient and self-reliant in trained manpower resource;

(b) ensuring that the implementation of development goals and targets in other productive and distributive sectors of the national economy is not handicapped by lack of trained manpower, particularly, technical, scientific and managerial personnel at middle and higher levels;

(c) ensuring that more effective, efficient and productive use is made available human resources, including effective integration of women into meaningful economic activities;

(d) fostering intra-African co-operation in developing much needed training capability and in utilizing available training facilities and African experts within the framework of regional technical co-operation among developing African countries.

In the overall strategy special attention is being given to education for development and innovation and the implications of these requirements for curricula development and course offerings in relation to Africa's natural resource endowment. The same special attention extends to the development of new skills and technical knowhow that have become imperative as a result of the adoption of the Lagos Plan of Action: manpower for the exploitation of energy, mineral and other natural resources; negotiating and technology transfer skills; maintenance skills for plants, machinery and equipment; financial resource management capability; manpower for the basic industries and for the transport sector.

II. Problems addressed and programme orientation

Human resources planning, development and utilization problems vary in scale and complexity from country to country in relation to resource potentials, population size and level of socio-economic development. However, at the continental level, these problems have common features which demand collective efforts in their resolution. The most critical of these problems as seen from the regional situation are the following:

(a) the shortage of trained labour or manpower at the middle and higher levels, particularly teachers, instructors, technicians, engineers, managers and industrial and agricultural extension workers;

(b) growing open and disguised unemployment, particularly among educated youth graduating from primary and secondary educational institutions;

(c) the discrepancy between knowledge, skills and attitudes derived from national education and training systems and the requirements for socio-economic transformation in relation to natural resource endowment and the urgent need to improve the quality of life for the masses of the population;

(d) the African "brain drain" and "skill drain" as a result of increasing numbers of educated and qualified Africans residing and working abroad outside the continent when their skills and knowhow are much needed in their home countries and in the region;

(e) inadequate, and in some cases ineffective, infrastructure for human resource planning, development and mobilization in terms of administrative framework, policy, programmes, and institutional arrangements and facilities;

(f) lack of capacity and facilities in most African countries to train the specialized manpower that they need, including adequate number of trainable persons, as well as the economic capacity to generate enough employment opportunities for all who are able and willing to work;

(g) the high level of dependencies on foreign developed countries for the supply of technical knowhow, managers and consultants and the high cost and severe foreign exchange drain that results from this dependence.

In an effort to assist member States resolve the foregoing problems, the Secretariat's work programmes and priorities for 1982-1983 and particularly the Medium-Term Plan, 1984-1989, have been designed with the following orientation of programme activities:

(a) the review of policies, systems, machinery and practices in human resources planning and mobilization and the development of personnel capability for the human resource planning function;

(b) the review, reform and re-orientation of educational structures, policies, curricula, subject offerings and course contents, including forms, design and methodology of training, in order to relate more directly to the needs of African economies for new sills, attitudes and capabilities for designing, executing and managing development projects and programmes;

(c) fostering the adoption of policies, measures and programmes for employment planning and employment generation and for improved productivity in the labour force through activities in non-formal education for adults and youth, development of African entrepreneurial potentials, development of educational and vocational career guidance services, and the operation of institutional machinery for the co-ordination, harmonization and rationalization of human resources development policies and programmes at the regional level;

(d) developing national and regional capabilities for manpower training through the development and strengthening of training institutions at national, multinational and regional levels, fostering intra-African co-operation in developing and utilizing subregional and regional specialized training institutions;

(e) the training of Africans in priority areas of manpower needs, particularly teachers, instructors, managerial cadres, technical personnel at technician and higher levels and other key personnel for the priority sectors in the Lagos Plan of Action through the operation of the Expanded Training and Fellowship Programme for Africa and the dissemination of information on other fellowship and training opportunities open to Africans;

(f) provision of advisory and consultancy services to member States at their request, on the foregoing broad activity areas with the aim of providing guidelines for policy options and for initiating action in specific problem areas.

III. Organization of the work programme

The sectoral work programme is organized into two sub-programmes, namely, Education and Training, including Fellowship Administration; and Manpower and Employment Planning and Policies. Each of these sub-programmes is made up of specific programme elements or group of operational activities, falling under such groups as:

(a) technical assistance and advisory services;

(b) studies;

(c) collection and dissemination of information;

(d) meetings, seminars and training workshops; and

(e) grants and fellowships.

The full text of the work programme is separately presented. It will be noted that the Plan spells out in broad outline what the main activities will be, expected results and available manpower resources for implementing the programme.

IV. Special consideration

It is worth noting that the elements in the work programme were not designed in isolation. Rather it has been necessary to take account of planned activities and priority areas in other sectoral programmes in order to collaborate efforts for the development of the human resource inputs in development projects in the sectors concerned. Hence work in manpower analysis and preparation of skill profiles as well as training manpower planners in skills identification and training programming are directly related to the manpower needs for the basic industries, for transport and communications, agriculture and natural resource exploitation for example. The same applies to the operation of the Expanded Training and Fellowship Programme for Africa which determines its priority areas for training and grant of fellowships in direct linkage with the priority manpower needs of the key sectors of the economy.

V. Collaboration with other organizations

ECA collaborates with several specialized and operating agencies of the United Nations system as well as with bilateral organizations in a joint endeavour to assist African States in the development and utilization of their human resources. In this connexion, mention is made of the formal co-operation agreements and periodic consultations the Secretariat has made with UNESCO in specific areas of education and training and with CAFRAD in respect of training for Development Administration. One major project in which several agencies are co-operating is the African Institute for Higher Technical Training and Research, Nairobi. In the development of the training and research programmes of this Institute FAO, WHO, UNESCO, ILO, UNIDO, UNEP and other organizations are expected to continue their collaboration in assisting ECA to design the curricula and programmes of specific centres of the Institute and develop their operational activities.

Sector: Public Administration and Finance (Development Administration and Management)

I. Overall strategy

Within the framework and guiding principles of the United Nations Third Development Decade and the Lagos Plan of Action as pertain to development administration and human resources, the approach to programme design in the field of development administration and management, traditionally styled public administration and finance, aims at achieving the following long-term objectives:

(a) reforming and strengthening administrative and institutional arrangements for the formulation and implementation of development plans and policies; enhanced capability for participation in international economic relations and decision making; and for the exercise of effective sovereignty over African natural resources;

(b) enhancing the leadership role of the public sector in the implementation of the Lagos Plan of Action and achieving improved productivity and effectiveness of public enterprises, including their use as instruments to forge intra-African economic co-operation;

(c) improved financial management capability and effective capacity to mobilize domestic resources for development;

(d) the training of technical and managerial personnel for improved performance and efficiency in the public sector.

In considering strategy options, due consideration was given to the growing concern that African public services were not effectively discharging their leadership role in the task of social and economic development with particular regard to their role as development planners, implementors, evaluators, co-ordinators and entrepreneurs. It was further recognized that the task of socio-economic engineering and of national unity was of a nature that called for the most relevant, effective and efficient machinery and institutions for governmental action, and for public servants with keen sense of duty, dedication, professional competence and the right attitudes for service to the public and for social change. Whilst all that needs to be done should be done at the national level, the regional programme in public administration and finance thus aims at encouraging, guiding and strengthening the required national action.

II. Problems addressed and programme orientation

As with human resource planning, development and mobilization, problems of development administration in African countries vary from country to country, both in scale and in variety; a lot depends upon inherited administrative structures, political systems, idologies and resource endowment.

Notwithstanding obvious differences, the African Administrative and management systems in their operation to cope with the task of nation building and socio economic transformation experience problems that are basically common when viewed from the developmental and continental angles. These problems which are outlined below formed the basis for the design and orientation of the Secretariat's work programme in an endeavour to assist African States achieve efficient, effective and result-oriented public administration and finance systems. The most critical of these problems are as follows:

(a) inadequacies and inefficiency in the delivery capabilities of governmental structures and procedures for development administration - although inherited administrative machinery, procedures and regulations which in colonial times were designed for the maintenance of law and order and collection of revenue, have been considerably restructured and realligned since independence, they still suffer from several weak links in the public sector capability to play effective role as development planner, implementor, co-ordinator, entrepreneur, incentive dispenser and negotiator of international and intra-African economic relations;

(b) lack of capability to foresee and fully comprehend the implications of development issues in their international setting, to monitor the design of other interests groups and actors in the international economic scene and evolve rational strategy and policy options that guarantee the fruitful pursuance of declared national development goals;

(c) because of an unfortunate legacy from the colonial past the men and women who operate existing administrative structures and procedures and design development policies themselves for the most part lack the proper attitudes that promote mass participation in national development efforts and in the fruits of development those paid to serve the public have assumed privileged attitudes, and their development concepts are generally seen in the framework of the needs of urban centres where they live, while their efforts to be objective are too frequently handicapped by political considerations;

(d) both quantitative and qualitative shortages of functionally qualified personnel and of staff with considerable experience constitute a serious constraint in the effectiveness, efficiency and overall performance of the public sector, while the shortage of technical and managerial personnel at the functional middle and higher levels constitutes a serious manpower bottleneck in development administration;

(e) decentralization of development administration aimed at ensuring increased people's participation in the development process has been a failure everywhere because local administrations have been denied a reasonable measure of financial independence, adequate funds, qualified personnel and delegated powers to function properly. The desire to hold to power at the centre by both politicians and the higher civil services means that no serious decentralization measures can really be carried out. Hence the need for a change of attitudes at the centres;

(f) African public enterprises, being confused in their objectives and impaired by political interference, have continued to operate as liabilities and constitute a major source of drain to the national exchequer - they are yet to prove themselves as effective instruments for forging dynamic public sector leadership and entrepreneurship that will make public enterprises profitable and serve as a channel for resource mobilization for development. Perhaps they can be more effective if given a good measure of freedom like their counterparts in the private sector, while still maintaining a measure of public surveillance over their operations.

(g) recurrent evidence of poor and inefficient management of public finance and waste of public funds because of ineffective use of the budget and development programming as instrument of resource mobilization and development plan implementation.

It is with a view to resolving the foregoing development administration problems and ensuring that governmental machinery, strucutres, institutional arrangements, procedures and the personnel operating them are adequately prepared for the difficult task of public sector leadership in nation building and socio-economic transformation that the Secretariat work programme 1982-83, and Medium-Term Plan, 1984-89 have been designed with the following orientation and objectives:

(a) the development of policies, institutional and administrative capabilities for efficient development administration through: improving the structures and procedures of African public services, public institutions, public enterprises and inter-governmental organizations in order to enable them to acquire the capability to formulate and effectively implement development policies and programmes;

(b) improving administrative and management capabilities of the public sector through training of personnel for positive job attitudes and public service spirit, for improved knowledge of development issues and acquisition of modern management skills and for enhancing public sector leadership and entrepreneurship;

(c) development of effective financial management capabilities in the public sector through advisory and training services in financial resources mobilization and use for development purposes, the efficient management of public expenditures and ways of avoiding public wastes;

(d) encouraging administrative reform measures and management development in the public sector in a manner that will make public administration and finance systems cope effectively with the development administration challenge of the Lagos Plan of Action within the framework of the task of the 1980s;

(e) developing enhanced role for the public sector, particularly public enterprises, in national and multinational development undertakings by developing guidelines and undertaking studies of investment opportunities that will give African public enterprises new dimensions to play their role;

(f) training of personnel at middle and higher levels and providing policy guidelines and advisory services oriented to problem solving.

(g) in collaboration with AAPAM, fostering mutual understanding between politicians and higher civil servants in their complementary roles and leadership functions and thereby promote a sense of partnership in development.

III. Organization of the work programme

Work programme activities in this sector are grouped under two sub-programmes. The first sub-programme deals with public administration and management, including public enterprises. It is made up of a series of programme activities dealing with consultancy and advisory services to member States on their request; studies on administrative structures and reform and the role of the public sector; public procurement and supply management; management of public enterprises; and a number of training workshops, seminars and negotiating meetings. The second sub-programme deals with public finance, mainly government budgeting and financial resource mobilization for development purposes.

Activities are grouped in the same presentation as for public administration, and include tax policy, legislation and administration; expenditure control and efficiency audit; and programme budgeting by object of expenditure.

Of special interest is the particular attention that the programme accords to the needs of African least developed and newly independent countries, especially with regard to the provision of advisory services. Institutional building and strengthening also figures prominently in the work programme. Promotional activities in this area include:

(a) support to the Association of African Tax Administrators;

(b) the development of subregional Graduate Schools of Business Management and Finance, being built around existing university infrastructure and facilities;

(c) establishment of an African Institute for Public Policy Analysis and Future Studies.

Programme activities in the area of public procurement and supply management have continued to be in high demand by member States for advisory and consultancy missions and training of personnel. The only constraint in this area has been lack of resources to respond to the growing demand. It is envisaged that during the Medium-term Plan country interest in the proposed African Procurement and Supplies Organizations will become more positive to warrant initiating action afresh for its establishment and development.

IV. Special Consideration

In the development of work programme activities in the field of development administration due consideration has been given to the tendency to assume that all is well with African public services and governmental structures and to give little or no attention to this area on every occasion the Commission meets to review the work programmes of the Secretariat. A further special consideration is that while there are so many problem areas in public sector management and its role, the resources placed at the disposal of both branches of the programme for the past ten years have been grossly inadequate, bearing no direct relationship to either planned activities or problem areas that ought to receive attention. The prospects that additional resources from the regular budget were most unlikely during the biennium 1982-1983 has thus influenced the limitation in the scope and level of planned programme activities.

V. Collaboration with other organizations

As indicated in the Medium-term Plan programme activities will involve fruitful collaboration with several bilateral and multilateral organizations, particularly CAFRAD, AAPAM, AATA, United Nations Development Administration Division and the MULPOCs. It is recognized that the programme needs to do more through the MULPOCs; to ensure this, the MULPOCs themselves must develop programme interest in the field of public administration finance, and management of public enterprises. Accordingly, provision should be made for activities in these fields through appropriate staff and resource allocation at the MULPOC level.